

**IDENTIFYING CUSTOMER SERVICE CRITERIA TO  
BE RECOMMENDED TO THE HEALDSBURG FIRE  
DEPARTMENT**

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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## **ABSTRACT**

For over a hundred years, the Healdsburg Fire Department (HFD) has maintained a close relationship with its community. The positive nature of this relationship has allowed the HFD to maintain a high level of satisfaction with the community.

In the 1990's, this relationship was altered as growth changed the demographics of the community and the public's expectation of serviced increased. It was recognized if the HFD was to maintain this level of satisfaction, it would need to improve its customer service. The purpose of this research was to develop criteria of a customer service plan to be recommended to the HFD.

Using the action research method, the following questions were asked:

1. What customer service criteria are being used by other public agencies ?
2. What customer service criteria are being used by other fire departments ?
3. What customer service criteria identified could be used by the HFD ?

To conduct this research, a review of available literature was conducted along with a series of follow-up interviews with the authors.

The findings revealed a number of criteria being used by fire departments and other governmental agencies including; surveys, greater public contact, providing employee incentives, integrating service sectors into emergency scene management, and recognizing exceptional performance.

The recommendations of the research are for the HFD to incorporate the following criteria into its organization: a customer satisfaction survey, use of the Service Sector into the management of emergencies, and to implement a program recognizing exceptional performance.

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## INTRODUCTION

For over a hundred years, the Healdsburg Fire Department (HFD) has served the community of Healdsburg, California. As a small town comprised of families who lived in the town for generations, many of whom were members of the fire department at one time or another, the HFD maintained a close relationship with the community it served. As the town began to grow during the last decade, and the make-up of the population changed, the HFD realized it would need to improve the quality of service it provided in order to maintain the satisfaction of the public. It was also recognized that the 1990s had ushered in an era of customer service (Gibbs, 1995), and to meet the expectations of the community in this changing environment, the HFD would have to improve the level of service it delivered to its customers. This problem was compounded by the absence of any formal customer service plan adopted by the HFD.

The purpose of this research was to develop criteria of a customer service plan to be recommended to the HFD. To complete this project, the action research method was used to answer the following questions:

1. What customer service criteria are being used by other public agencies?
2. What customer service criteria are being used by other fire departments?
3. What customer service criteria identified could be used by the Healdsburg Fire Department?

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Since it was organized in 1886, the Healdsburg Fire Department had not addressed the issue of customer service or attempted to define the level of satisfaction the community derived from the services it provided. Several reasons for this existed. As an organization comprised mainly of volunteers, the emphasis was primarily emergency response and the public did not have high expectations of the department. There had also never been a request from the community to implement such a review, nor had the department experienced a negative incident to act as a catalyst to start one.

However, in the 1990's several national trends emerged which began to effect this. The public was found to becoming less satisfied with many of the products and services it received from local government (Gibbs, 1996), and there was an expectation by the community of improved service (Lightbody, 1996). Changes in the global market place began to put enormous pressures on government institutions and the conventional way services were delivered (Gaebler & Osborne, 1993), and increased citizen participation placed the fire service under greater scrutiny (Templeton, 1996).

One example of this locally, was the formation of a citizens committee in September of 1994 to examine the budget of each department in the City of Healdsburg. When the committee's report was made public in March of 1995, its findings were consistent with these trends. Among the recommendations for the HFD were the following; conduct courtesy home inspections, incorporating changes and innovations used by other governmental and non-governmental agencies, and increase the use of volunteers in non-conventional (other than fire fighting) roles.

The report clearly suggested, that if the HFD was to fulfill the expectations of the community, it would have to re-evaluate its method of conducting business and incorporate more of the ideals of customer service into its day to day operations.

This research is relevant to the *Executive Development* course since module eleven is entirely devoted to the topic of Service Quality.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Service Quality**

While conducting a review of the literature, the use of the term customer service was found by many authors to be used interchangeably with the term service quality, prompting an examination of the definition of quality.

In his biography on Edward Deming, Aguayo defines quality as “anything that enhances the product from the viewpoint of the customer” (Aguayo, 1990 pg. 35). Albrecht in *The Only Thing That Matters*, defined quality as “a measure of the extent to which a thing or experience meets a need, solves a problem, or adds value for someone” (Albrecht, 1992 pg. 71).

The application of quality into the workplace is not as definitive and can manifest itself in a number of ways.

To improve quality in an organization, one approach made popular by Edward Deming, is to reverse the traditional organizational structure. Using his model, groups are recognized by their importance in the following order; customers, the employees who serve them, and finally, management (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993 ).

Recognition of the employee's importance was not limited to Deming. Smith (1992) placed a great deal of emphasis on the employee by stating they must be treated with the same respect and concern afforded the organization's customers.

Establishing incentives and motivation through a reward and recognition program was also found to be important if quality service was to be successful (Denton, 1989). The effectiveness of such a program occurs not only from the physical recognition that is given, but from the underlying message that is established when such a program is implemented by management (Paulsgrove, 1991).

While reward and recognition programs were clearly found to be advantageous, they also presented risks. Unless it is clearly defined what performance should be rewarded or what the award criteria will be, an organization risks awarding behavior of questionable value and invalidating the entire program (Templeton, 1996).

### **Designing Services to meet Needs and Expectations**

An issue identified by several researchers in the literature was the importance of realizing the expectations of the customer, and to design the organization's services around them. To accomplish this, Davidow & Uttal (1989) used a fundamental approach by suggesting a business first identify its market and develop a service strategy around its needs.

One example of this was found in the Fire Service of South Africa. After the recent change of government, most fire agencies saw their markets quadruple in size from a relatively small homogeneous group, to a large population comprised of many different races. Most fire departments reacted positively to this change by redesigning their service strategies to provide community based programs to help the large, economically disadvantaged



population (Lightbody, 1996).

While meeting the needs of the community was found to be important, it was not the only trait of a successful organization. In his examination of service quality in private industry, Denton (1989) determined success could only be enjoyed if, rather than trying to determine what their customers wanted, the organization found what their customers expected of them. Once these expectations were identified, a strategy could then be developed to meet them.

The concept of expectations was not limited to private industry. In *Reinventing Government*, Osborne and Gaebler (1993) argued that the public expects to be treated as a customer, even from government agencies. This sentiment was found to be stronger among younger generations who had higher expectations than their parents.

To help meet these expectations, Coleman (1995) found a government agency should increase the level of contact it has with the public. Since most of the public felt it equated to service, as long as a government entity maintains this contact, the public's expectations would largely be met.

The nature of the contact was also found to be important. Historically, the public did not expect more from a fire department than a quick response to a fire or rescue. However, as fire departments become more involved in non-emergency activities, especially those that are of benefit to the community, their image is greatly enhanced (Brandewie, 1996).

Cooper (1997) shared this view of community oriented fire protection concept. By implementing fire cadets, toy give-a-way and mentoring programs, the fire department found it improved public relations and as a result, improved the quality of its emergency response.

Marcucci (1997) found this concept creates a paradigm for the fire service and that a

department's organizational strategy must be predicated on the belief that they can assume responsibilities outside their traditional roles.

### **Paradigm Shift and Empowering Employees**

Changing the way we run our organizations was found to be an effective way to enhance service quality. In *Setting the Boundaries for Success*, Fincher (1993) used the term "Paradigm". A paradigm is defined as "a set of rules and regulations that establishes or defines boundaries and tells you how to behave inside these boundaries so as to be successful" (Fincher, 1993, pg. 18).

Cooper (1997) acknowledged the paradigm shift by indicating the fire service has began to look for, and adopt innovative and non-traditional solutions to the challenges it faces. This finding was also not limited to the fire service.

In an assessment of 97 city and county governments in Arizona, Gibbs (1996) found that a willingness to rethink the system was necessary if exceptional, equitable and reliable customer service was to be provided.

One method repeatedly cited as an effective way to "re-think" how an organization operates is through employee empowerment. Unless an employee feels they can respond to a customer without concerns on how their performance is viewed by management, the employee will become dependent on the organization rather than a contributing member (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). Therefore, in an era where the public expects rapid response and good information from government, well informed and empowered employees are essential to the organization (Gibbs, 1996).

This concept was echoed by Denton (1989). "Front-line employees must have the

freedom as well as authority and responsibility to deal with the individual customer” (Denton, 1989, pg. 12)

In an examination of employee empowerment in the fire service, Brunacini (1996) found an empowered employee is critical if an organization is to achieve a superior level of customer service. To become empowered, employees were encouraged to ask themselves the following seven questions: Is it the right thing for the customer?; Is it the right thing for our department ?; Is it legal, ethical and nice ?; Is it safe ?; Is it on your organizational level ?; Is it something you are willing to be accountable for ?; and is it consistent with our department’s values and policies ? (Brunacini, 1996, pg. 69). If all of the questions could be answered positively, employees were encouraged to act as they saw fit. Performance that followed these guidelines was encouraged to be rewarded through a *Record of Exceptional Performance Standard* used by the Phoenix Fire Department (Brunacini, 1996).

Awards for exceptional performance were not limited to the fire service of the United States. In the West Midlands Fire Service in Great Britain, Total Quality Management (TQM) Awards are given for actions or suggestions that improve the efficiency of the organization (Menzler, 1997).

## **PROCEDURES**

Research for this paper began with a review of the literature available at the National Emergency Training Center’s Learning Resource Center in June of 1997. Additional reviews were conducted at the Healdsburg Branch of the Sonoma County Public Library in California, and the author’s personal library in July and August of 1997. The information was sorted, based how germane it was to the topic and upon its age.

Follow-up interviews were also performed with several authors to clarify information presented in the journals and periodicals reviewed.

One June 16, 1997, Ron Edwards, a Public Affairs Specialist with the West Midlands Fire Brigade Community Relations Division, was interviewed over the telephone regarding customer service policies his agency has implemented.

On June 23, Randy Templton, the Captain responsible for Austin Fire Department's Quality Initiatives was interviewed over the telephone to gain a broader perspective of their Customer Service Program.

On June 25, Cathy Brandewie, Public Information Supervisor for the Austin Fire Department was interviewed over the telephone to gain additional information regarding the Community Service Sector Concept.

In addition, a lecture by Alan Brunacini, on Customer Service in the Fire Service was attended on August 14, 1997. A brief personal interview was conducted with Chief Brunacini following the lecture, to confirm information regarding the Phoenix Fire Department's Customer Service Program.

One August 14, Chief Robert Marcucci of the San Rafael Fire Department was interviewed to discuss the topic of Community Fire Servicing. A follow-up interview was conducted on October 13, 1997 to verify specific applications of their survey program.

A phone interview was conducted on August 17, 1997 with Captain Steve Metcho of the Novato Fire District regarding their departments use of a customer satisfaction survey.

Limitations encountered in conducting this project included having a limited amount of time to complete the research and finding a limited amount of information on the topic of customer service in the fire service and in the public sector.

### **Definitions**

Quality: A characteristic or standard measure of excellence.

Customer Service: A department or function of an organization that responds to inquires or complaints from customers or that organization.

## **RESULTS**

The following results were organized around each research question:

### **What Customer Service Criteria are being used by other Public Agencies ?**

Researching this question presented an unexpected finding. It was anticipated a wide variety of information would be available on this topic. However, only a handful of customer service criteria was found. Surprisingly, most of the discussion was limited to a simple reference about the existence of a certain program. Detailed information such as how the criteria was implemented, its impact and effect on the organization were mostly absent.

### **Surveys**

Among the most common criteria found to be used by other public agencies was the use of the survey. Regardless of the public institution, many organizations expressed great interest in learning how they were viewed by their customers, and what could be done to improve their performance.

In 1987, the Madison, Wisconsin Police Department (MPD) began a program to survey its customers using a postage-paid self addressed stamped envelope. Each month, every 35<sup>th</sup> person with whom the agency makes contact is mailed a survey. Each asks the

recipient to rate the agency on seven factors; concern, helpfulness, knowledge, quality of service, professional conduct, how well they solved the problem, and whether they put the person at ease. An open ended question asks: “How can we improve the quality of our service in the future ?” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, pg. 173).

A very different public agency also found to use surveys was the Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton, Wisconsin. Each year a representative sample of 650 students are asked to rate; teaching effectiveness, different instructional methods, student services, and the library. The institution feels their surveys have made its curriculum so successful, it guarantees its training courses for businesses by repeating a course for free with a new instructor if a business is not satisfied (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993).

### **Increasing Public Contact**

Another criteria used to enhance customer service was to increase the amount of contact an agency has with the public. One method used to accomplish this was to bring the offices of the various public agencies as close as possible to the customers they are serving.

In Scottsdale, Arizona, a city hall branch office was opened in a local mall, allowing customers the opportunity to pay utility bills, obtain building permits and enroll in recreation programs while shopping (Gibbs, 1996).

Opening mini police sub-stations throughout the community was also found to be used. As one element of a “Community Oriented Policing” concept, the stations are used to promote contact between an officer and their respective neighborhood beat. Subsequently, the police department found it could build stronger relationships the businesses, schools, PTA’s, churches and other community organizations (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993, pg. 49).

### **Employee Incentives**

The use of incentives for outstanding performance was found to be used by a number of agencies. Rewards were also made available for suggestions that generated a cash savings to the organization.

In Tempe, Arizona, employees that found a better method for dealing with customers or improving a program design received a cash bonus and special recognition from the city (Gibbs, 1996).

Similar programs were found to exist in Phoenix, St. Paul, Los Angeles, Dade County Florida, Minnesota, and at federal level, in the Department of Defense (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993).

### **What Customer Service Criteria are being used by other Fire Departments ?**

### **Surveys**

The most consistently used criteria found to be used by fire departments to enhance customer service was the use of the survey. The length and nature of each survey varied by department.

In Texas, the Austin Fire Department utilizes a postcard, sized survey which is mailed to any recipient who was received an emergency response from their agency. Perforated down the middle, instructions on one leaf direct the customer to complete the opposite side which is then detached and returned to the fire department by the use of a self-addressed, stamped cover (see Appendix “A”).

A similar postcard sized survey was also found to be used by the Novato (California) Fire District (see Appendix “B”).

The San Rafael (California) Fire Department uses a survey specific to each of the services it provides: emergency response, engine company inspections and fire prevention bureau inspections (Appendix “C1, C2 & C3”).

A more comprehensive survey was found to be used by the West Midlands Fire Brigade (Birmingham, England). The size of a full page brochure, the survey is mailed to individuals who have suffered a property loss due to fire, six to eight weeks after the incident has occurred (Appendix “D”).

The Phoenix, Arizona Fire Department uses surveys as one part of a larger pamphlet that is distributed to any individuals who suffer a fire loss. Providing detailed information on how to cope with the variety of problems caused by a fire, the “After the Fire” brochure includes the survey at the end of the document. Similar to the postcard formats used by Austin and Novato, the survey poses thirteen questions which are answered by rating the particular response from one (low) to five (high). The survey ends with a small blank portion for specific comments and an overall rating question (Appendix “E”).

### **Community Service Sector**

Another criteria found to be used by other fire departments to enhance customer service was to integrate a “Community Services Sector” (CSS) into the fire ground command system (Brandewie, 1996).

While most elements of fire ground command deal with resolving the emergency, the CSS (also known as the “Occupant Services Sector”) focuses on the victims and addressing their needs. In the CSS, fire personnel work with the Red Cross to provide temporary housing, walk through the structure with the occupants to assist with the salvage of personal



belongings, explain the actions of the fire department, help the occupants secure the property and make arrangements with utilities and insurance companies.

In the literature reviewed, both the Phoenix and Austin Fire Departments were found to have implemented CCS, complete with standard operating procedures (see Appendices “F” & “G”).

### **Recognizing Exceptional Performance**

Establishing a program that recognizes exceptional performance was another criteria used to enhance customer service in fire agencies. Three different fire agencies were found to have established programs in place.

The Phoenix Fire Department’s program has been developed into an Administrative Regulation and recognizes an individual through the use of a “Record of Exceptional Performance” or “Green Sheet” (Brunacini, 1996, pg. 122). To receive a Green Sheet, an individual may be nominated by any supervisor in the department. The nomination, is then passed on to the individual’s immediate supervisor, who presents the award at an appropriate time (see Appendix “H”).

The West Midlands Fire Brigade program was more general in nature. Rather than identify only exceptional performance, the West Midlands system uses a standard form to track compliments, comments & complaints and is titled the same (R. Edwards, personal communication, June 16, 1997). The procedure has been adopted into a departmental Standing Order with formal written guidelines for its use (see Appendix “I”).

In Austin, the fire department has adopted the “Customer Service Star Program” to identify exceptional public service (C. Brandewie, personal communication, June 25, 1997). Each quarter, up to four recognition pins along with a \$50.00 cash prize are bestowed by an

awards committee. To be recognized, employees must have met one or more of the following criteria; provided exceptional customer service, attempted to correct something that has gone wrong or caused customer disappointment, assisted a customer using creativity or resourcefulness, solved a problem in an innovative manner, or have consistently provided exemplary service to the department and community. The program has been in use since 1995, as adopted by the Assistant Chief as a Special Order (see Appendix “J”).

### **What Customer Service Criteria could be used by the Healdsburg Fire Department?**

Among the criteria used by other public agencies and fire departments, the use of surveys, the community services sector, and the implementation of a program that recognizes exceptional performance would be appropriate for use by the Healdsburg Fire Department.

Regardless of the agency, surveys were found to be a widely used tool. Given the importance of the feedback they provide, the HFD could use the survey for two applications; to establishing a benchmark from which to measure current performance and, to allow the department to keep pace with the current expectations of its customers.

The Community Services Sector (CSS), would also be appropriate for use by the HFD. Although the CSS was only found in large metropolitan fire departments which experienced a greater number of fires, the program clearly proved beneficial for both the fire victim and the responding agency. However, it would have to be modified due to the smaller size of the HFD and the fewer number of personnel that could be assigned to the program.

Documenting exceptional performance would also prove beneficial to the HFD. Currently, the department’s annual evaluation provides the only format where written feedback

on an employee's performance is given. Implementation of a program that provides positive feedback for exceptional behavior at more frequent intervals would create an opportunity to motivate the employee to maintain higher customer service standards.

## **DISCUSSION**

When comparing the results of the research, it became apparent most of the findings in the literature review examined the issues only by name, while the study results provided real life applications of these issues.

For example, Osborne and Gaebler's discussion regarding employee recognition was limited to a brief explanation on turning the hierarchical pyramid upside down in order to rank the importance of employees closer to that of the customers. Smith stressed the importance of employees, but limited his remarks to "valuing employees as much as customers" (Smith, 1997, pg. 80) while Denton (1989) found employee incentive programs essential to good customer service programs. However, all of these researchers neglected to offer specific examples or provide any elaboration to support their findings.

The same lack of specificity was found when examining other customer service criteria.

For example, while several researchers (Lightbody, Davidow & Uttal) recognized the importance of an organization designing its services to meet the expectations of its customers, few illustrations on how to actually accomplish this were given. To find specific applications, additional research had to be performed. The literature review and results were characterized by this relationship.

In his examination of employee empowerment, Brunacini (1996) provided an exception

to this trend. In a comprehensive discussion on the topic, specific guidelines were provided, and examples of incidents involving empowered employees were described in great detail.

The interpretation of the findings presents several broader messages for the fire service. Throughout most of its existence, the mission of the fire service was quite clear; respond to and extinguish fires. As long as this was done with a reasonable degree of proficiency, the public was generally satisfied. However, two challenging trends have emerged. The public now expects the fire service to fulfill services beyond its traditional role, and they have become increasingly scrutinous each time these roles are carried out. In an effort to greater define these expectations, innovative fire service managers have looked for proven methods to obtain feedback from the populations they serve. As a result, the use of the survey began.

Another interpretation of these results shows that the fire service has learned to benefit by becoming more compassionate.

As an organization with a heavy military influence, the fire service had developed a very specific job description: fight and extinguish fires. Although this job description has evolved to include other fields such as emergency medical services (EMS) and hazardous materials response, little effort was made to develop programs that were humanitarian in nature. However, as the public became more knowledgeable and their expectations of government increased, the need for such programs has become evident. The inclusion of the Community Service Sector (CSS) into emergency incidents has allowed fire agencies to respond to this expectation, and in the process, demonstrate a more humane side.

One final interpretation made from these results pertains to an evolution of management styles that has occurred in the fire service. As previously alluded, the traditional management model borrowed from the military, was based on a strict chain-of-command principle. When

given, commands were expected to be followed explicitly and individual recognition did generally not occur unless related to a heroic act. Conversely, if performance was substandard, disciplinary action was the norm.

Implementation of Austin's "Customer Service Star" Program, Phoenix's "Record of Exceptional Performance", and West Midland's "Compliments, Comments and Complaints" demonstrate the traditional management style of the fire service is being eclipsed by more contemporary models. Consistent with findings that were made by Denton, Smith and Paulsgrove, this model suggests the fire service has recognized the benefits of managing employees through nurturing verses discipline.

In many organizations, this concept has been taken a step further by allowing employees to participate in management issues and to become empowered in all phases of the operation.

The implications of these results helps to illustrate three areas where the HFD, and a majority of the fire service could improve.

The first, pertains to the need to better understand our customers and learn their expectations, especially before new programs or responsibilities are assumed.

Until recently, the fire service had a very defined mission in the eyes of the public. As long as a department responded to each fire and did a reasonable job of extinguishment, the public's expectations were satisfied. However, the combination of a more informed public and a variety of new roles for the fire service have caused these expectations to change. If a medical emergency, a hazardous materials release, or disaster occurs, most now expect the fire department to respond. Many fire agencies have interpreted this as a mandate to further expand into these fields by absorbing hazardous materials regulatory and enforcement

programs, and disaster preparedness activities. Much of this expansion has occurred without first obtaining public feedback and with unfortunate results.

When private corporations formulated strategy without first determining the response of the public, significant losses and total business failures were often the result. As public concerns, the fire service must learn from these mistakes. Especially in an environment where the public is more educated and has better access to information. One example can be found in an environmental program the HFD participated in that provided incentives and educational workshops to businesses that used hazardous materials in an environmentally friendly manner. Although a significant amount of time was dedicated to the program, the response from the business community was minimal, resulting in the department abandoning the program.

Therefore, understanding the needs and expectations of the public is vital to the success of any program, and in many cases, the life of an organization.

Just as understanding the needs and expectations of the public is vital, so is the need to maintain statistical data on the public's opinion of an agency. The absence of any such data in the HFD exemplifies another area where improvement could occur. Compounding this problem is the changing nature of the fire service.

As the occurrence of fires has declined and the incidence of non-fire related calls increased, the HFD has found it harder to measure how well it has satisfied its customers. No longer gauged only by their performance on the fire ground, the HFD is measured by their actions at incidents such as hazardous material spills, inspection activities and public education programs. Unless a mechanism is developed to identify the public's opinion of the HFD for these activities, and it is used over a certain time frame to develop a statistically acceptable database, the HFD will be at a disadvantage in understanding how it is viewed by the public.

Without this type of information, it will become difficult to conduct any long range planning or develop a future strategy for the agency.

The third area of improvement implied for the HFD pertains to its ability to react quickly to an increasingly demanding public.

As the public becomes more informed and demanding, the HFD will find it necessary to become more innovative as an organization. To achieve this goal will require motivated and empowered employees. Although organizations are run from the top down, innovation most frequently comes from the employee working at a lower level in the organization. In those instances where innovation comes from the executive level, success requires acceptance from the entire organization. Therefore, it is imperative management empower each member of the organization and allow them to respond as they see fit to a given situation, as long as a loose set of guidelines are adhered to. Although the HFD does allow each employee a certain degree of latitude, the strength of the organization could be increased by implementing a set policy on empowerment. With clear guidance, there would be less reluctance to respond immediately to a given problem and the efficiency of the organization as a whole would be enhanced.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The HFD should begin a program to enhance the customer service of its organization. As suggested by the findings, this could be done, by developing and implementing the three customer service criteria identified in the results to the third research question. They are; a customer satisfaction survey, use of a Community Service Sector during emergency incidents, and establishment of a program that documents exceptional performance.

Implementation of a customer satisfaction survey would prove relatively simple for the

organization. The variety of sample surveys used by other fire agencies would provide a useful outline from which the HFD could develop their own. Given a public that has increased expectations of government, the survey could prove quite valuable.

Although past examples have shown only a small portion of surveys are typically returned, any feedback received could prove valuable information for the organization and would present options for positive change.

It is also recommended that the HFD begin a program that recognizes exceptional performance among its employees. In a work environment where routine activities are growing, the need to motivate employees accustomed to the excitement of emergency response has become increasingly important. Therefore, any program that provides an incentive would prove beneficial to the organization.

To provide clear instruction as to what criteria deserves recognition, such a program would best be developed into a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) similar to the *Record of Exceptional Performance* program used by Phoenix Fire Department.

Implementation of Customer Service Sector (CSS) would also be beneficial for the organization and should be included into the HFD's operation. Not unlike the program that recognizes exceptional performance, the CSS should be developed into an SOP similar to those used by the Austin and Phoenix Fire Departments. Although it has the potential to clearly improve the level of customer service, the CSS program would be least beneficial of the three recommendations simply due to the infrequency of fires within the HFD's jurisdiction.

The inclusion of these three programs into the HFD would provide an excellent foundation for a more comprehensive customer service program. As they are implemented and feedback identifies other needs, they could be adjusted to better serve the community and address its constantly changing needs.



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